

PLANNING & HOMELAND SECURITY COMMAND

photo by Matt Milam



Assistant Chief
Daniel Snell

Planning
Administration

Hazardous
Materials
Team

Aircraft
Rescue &
Firefighting
(ARFF)

Technical
Rescue
Team

Houston
Medical
Strike
Team

Staff
Services

Classified
Recruiting

"Planning and Homeland Security is more than just a mouthful of words. In my opinion, it is one of the most important aspects of what we do in the Houston Fire Department. The Cheshire Cat, in the movie Alice in Wonderland, made the statement, 'If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter which way you go.' It is a very appropriate statement with regard to planning. Having a thorough knowledge of why, how, when, and what you want to accomplish is paramount to the success of any organization. Through a cooperative effort from all aspects of the department, the HFD continues to develop a plan for success.

With the ever-increasing threat of terrorism and use of Weapons of Mass Destruction, it is equally important to plan and prepare to respond to such events. Huge efforts have been taken to ensure the safety of our responders and the citizens we are sworn to protect. The Houston Fire Department is better prepared to respond to these types of threats than ever before and we are dedicated to continue this effort. Each day brings a new challenge and with that challenge, a new responsibility. This responsibility does not rest solely within this command. It is a responsibility that each and every individual must accept."

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." Proverbs 15:22, NIV

The Planning & Homeland Security Command is comprised of:

- Hazardous Materials Response Team
- Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighters
- Technical Rescue Team
- Houston Medical Strike Team
- Classified Recruiting
- Staff Services
- Planning Administration



The command provides oversight for the Water Strike Team and the Urban Search and Rescue team. There are currently 242 classified and 16 civilian positions assigned to this Command.

Planning Administration

The Planning Administration section includes the Office of the Assistant Fire Chief as well as the Fire Administrator for the Greater Houston Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). It is comprised of three classified and four civilian full-time positions. Several temporary positions can be added to the section in order to complete special projects.

Daily duties and activities:

- Management of a \$21 million operating budget
- Researching firefighter safety and welfare issues
- Ensuring and maintaining Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) compliance - HFD is the largest accredited fire department in the nation
- Managing the daily operations and activities of the LEPC
- Securing and administering federal grant monies from procurement to the deployment of goods and services



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Aircraft Rescue & Firefighting

The Houston Fire Department Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) team provides definitive response to all aviation emergencies at both major airports, Bush Intercontinental and Hobby. We provide a safe path of escape for passengers aboard aircraft, extinguish aircraft fires, mitigate emergent hazardous conditions and provide excellent emergency medical care to the flying public. With Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) 139 as a reference mandate, Houston ARFF provides the best possible aviation emergency response through daily training, proper staffing levels, a well-maintained vehicle fleet, and a close working relationship with airport management.

More than 44 million passengers travel through the airports annually, making Houston one of the largest and busiest airport systems in the country, responding to 1,022 calls in 2004. Organizations, including the City of Houston Aviation Department and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), work with HFD to routinely test the skills and knowledge of the 144 ARFF personnel assigned to the four ARFF stations – three at Bush and one at Hobby.



Special Projects

- Pursuing passage of a city ordinance requiring the retrofit of sprinkler systems in high-rise buildings. If successful, this would result in the complete square footage coverage of approximately 250 high-rise buildings by sprinklers over a period of 12 years.
- Participation in projects designed to ensure continuity of critical city operations following a disaster or catastrophe
- Pursuing the funding, procurement, and distribution of 700 high-visibility safety vests and 700 personal flotation devices for HFD personnel
- Procure funding for the replacement of older 4" attack fire hose within the department
- Pursuing the funding, procurement, and distribution of 85 (one per each engine) Exit Devices designed to guide disoriented firefighters to a safe exit. These units include a 360-degree strobe light and a 110dB intermittent siren.

Staff Services

Staff Services is comprised of four sections: Governmental Liaison, Legal Services, Grievance Administration and Language Assessment. These sections are responsible for overseeing many vital functions, which directly affect the other commands of the Houston Fire Department:

- The Governmental Liaison section monitors newly filed legislation for the purpose of determining a potential impact on HFD
- Legal Services provides advice on matters concerning Civil Service appeals, Loudermil hearings, Texas Workforce Commission appeals, etc.
- The Grievance Office governs the filing, handling and record keeping of firefighter grievances
- Conducts investigations of wrongdoing by members and administers discipline where necessary
- The Language Assessment section administers bilingual assignment pay using an oral proficiency interview



Houston Medical Strike Team

A municipality's emergency preparedness must include the ability to respond to a myriad of emergency types. A type of emergency incident that has recently become more evident is the threat of attacks involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The use of a WMD carries the potential to cause catastrophic loss of life and property. Preparing to effectively handle these types of incidents can be a challenging task.

Realizing that assistance from outside agencies may not arrive in Houston for approximately 12 hours or more, the city formed the Houston Medical Strike Team (HMST). The HMST is a highly specialized group of personnel that is equipped and trained to respond to a WMD event -whether nuclear, biological, or chemical. The primary mission of the HMST is to effectively identify the agent, retrieve victims, conduct mass decontamination, provide site security, prepare for evidence collection, and assist in planning long-term recovery for the community. This 144-member team of emergency rescue (fire), medical, health, police, and emergency management personnel are also a key component of the Regional Medical Response System. The initial HMST response will include assembly and deployment of 46 team members. Reinforcement comes through the deployment of two additional task forces.

A recent Urban Area Security Initiative (USAI) grant made available by the Department of Homeland Security has made it possible for HFD to purchase needed equipment and supplies for the HMST. Helmets, chemical protective clothing, protective gloves, and boot covers have been purchased and placed in the HMST equipment cache.

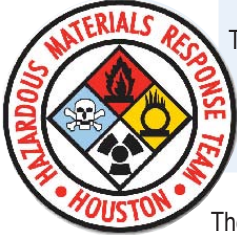
PLANNING & HOMELAND SECURITY COMMAND

The Hazardous Materials Response Team

The Hazardous Materials Response Team (HMRT) protects emergency responders, the community, and our environment by achieving the most comprehensive and professional approach to resolving hazardous materials emergencies. The HMRT provides a highly trained and experienced group of personnel to aid the Incident Commander during events involving chemical, biological, explosive, and radiological materials. The HMRT is also a key component of the Regional Medical Response System.



Responses to emergencies resulting from hazardous material spills, releases, or accidents have become a routine function of the Houston Fire Department. Major incidents require a complex undertaking, considerable knowledge, and training. Such incidents may require the coordination and integration of several agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the United States Coast Guard.



The department maintains a well staffed and highly trained Hazardous Materials Response Team (HMRT) consisting of 46 members whose primary objective is to train for and respond only to reported hazardous materials incidents throughout the city and to mutual aid incidents in surrounding jurisdictions. The HMRT also offers assistance to other neighboring departments throughout the greater Houston area and is an active member of Channel Industries Mutual Aid (CIMA).

The Houston Fire Department has been able to train all personnel assigned to suppression to the first responder operations level or higher for hazardous materials incidents. This has enabled the department to arrive on the scene of any HAZMAT situation within 6 minutes for 74% of the incidents. The HMRT is located in southeast Houston near the ship channel and operates out of its own dedicated station as a multi-piece company. This strategic location has allowed the HMRT to arrive on location in twenty minutes or less for 72% of incidents in 2004.

On a daily basis, the HMRT maintains a minimum of 10 staff members assigned to two main response units, a foam engine, and a utility vehicle. The staffing allows the HMRT to have an Incident Commander, a Safety Officer, a two-member entry team and a two-member backup team to operate at an incident. Since the inception of HMRT in 1979, the department has not experienced a shortage of members who request assignment to the specialized unit. In addition to the first-line equipment named above, one heavy-duty response vehicle remains at the HMRT station as a reserve unit.

During the past year, HMRT has maintained a highly aggressive pace, including the following accomplishments:

- Established and maintained coordination between local, regional, state and federal jurisdictions and officials regarding various HazMat/WMD and other Homeland Security issues
- Utilized federal grant funds to procure specialized vehicles, equipment, clothing, and tools to improve the response capabilities of the HMRT
- Conducted individual and team training that complies with the training competencies set forth by OSHA, EPA, the Texas Commission on Fire Protection and NFPA 472

2004 Responses

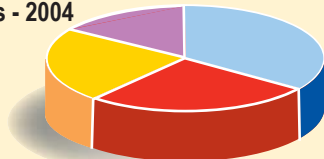
- Estimated-1277 events
- Responses- 2,030
- 759 determined to be non-HMRT or "turn-a-rounds"
- 2004 average response time - 15.7 minutes

Miscellaneous 2004

- 76 incidents occurred on major freeways and the 610 Loop
- Traffic closures - 11
- Average incident closure time - 193 minutes
- Excavations or shelter-in-place - 20
- Chemicals handled - 81
- EPA-declared as "Extremely Hazardous Substances" - 5

Highest number of incidents - 2004

- North Loop East - 13
- East Freeway - 9
- Katy Freeway - 8
- North Freeway - 7



2005 Responses

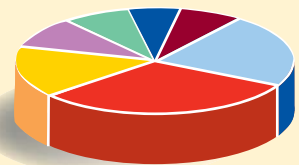
- Estimated- 1,251 events
- Responses- 1,887
- 712 determined to be non-HMRT or "turn-a-rounds"
- 2005 average response time-14.2 minutes

Miscellaneous 2005

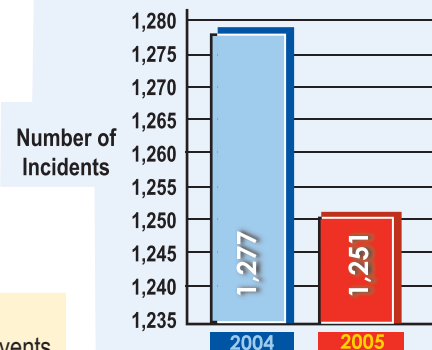
- 59 incidents occurred on the Loop and freeways
- Traffic closures-13
- Average incident closure time- 141 minutes
- Excavations or shelter-in-place- 14
- Chemicals handled - 125
- EPA as "Extremely Hazardous Substances"- 7

Highest number of incidents 2005

- North Loop East- 7
- Southwest Freeway- 6
- East Freeway- 4
- Katy Freeway- 4
- East Loop North- 3
- East Loop South- 3
- LaPorte Freeway- 3



2004-2005 Hazardous Materials Team Incidents



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Technical Rescue Team (TRT)

The Technical Rescue Team (TRT) provides the highest level of life-saving efforts through organized search and rescue efforts. The TRT, with its 42 assigned members, is the primary agency responsible for all search and rescue functions in Houston.

The goal of TRT is to respond to a rescue scene within 15-20 minutes, allowing rescue personnel the best opportunity to enhance the survival rate of victims. TRT bases this response requirement on the "Golden Hour" – defined as the time period of one hour in which the lives of a majority of critically injured trauma patients can be saved if definitive medical intervention is provided. These 60 minutes include notification and dispatch, extrication and preparation of the victim(s) for transport, and transport to a trauma center.

The Technical Response vehicles are currently deployed from two stations, located in close proximity to Houston's major transportation loop system to allow the best opportunity for a reasonable response time.



The following equipment is available to the TRT:

- 1 Inflatable Rescue Boat (assigned to TRT)
- 2 Technical Rescue Response Apparatus (assigned to TRT)
- 5 Swift Water Rescue Boats
- 10 Evacuation Boats
- 30 E-One Ladder Trucks
- 32 Hydraulic Extrication Equipped Ladder Trucks
- 1 Special Operations/Trench Trailer (assigned to TRT)
- 1 Special Operations/Structural Collapse Trailer (assigned to TRT)
- 1 Shoring Truck (assigned to TRT)



During the past year, TRT has maintained a highly aggressive pace both in training and operational tempo. Recent accomplishments by the team include:

- Conducting Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities training for team members that complies with the training competencies set forth by OSHA, NFPA Standards 1006 and 1670, and the Texas Commission on Fire Protection
- Utilizing federal grant funds to procure specialized vehicles, equipment, clothing, and tools to improve the response capabilities of the TRT (especially regarding heavy structural collapse)
- Conducting individual and crew training for HFD members not assigned to the TRT complies with the training competencies set forth by NFPA 1670. This would include motor vehicle extrication, boat training (water rescue), and confined space rescue training.

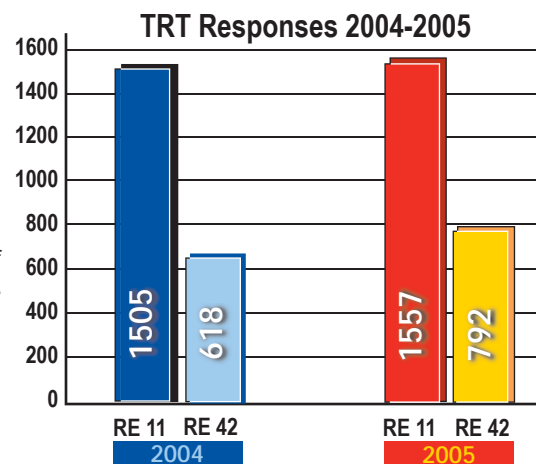
2004 Data

Rescue Runs
RE 11 - 1510 Responses
RE 42 - 621 Responses
Average Response Time: 9 minutes

2005 Data

Rescue Runs:
RE 11- 1557 Responses
RE 42- 792 Responses
Average Response Time: 9 minutes, 3 seconds

Number of Responses



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Classified Recruiting

The Houston Fire Department Classified Recruiting Division's goal is to recruit and hire the best available personnel in Houston and surrounding areas. We are aggressively seeking to increase minority recruiting, to reflect Houston's most current census data. We have teamed up with The Houston WorkSource Youth Centers and the HFD Community Outreach division to increase the awareness of fire service career opportunities in minority communities. We are also working closely with staff members of the Houston Community College (HCC) Fire Science and Technology Department to channel qualified graduates to HFD.

One of our most recent initiatives, a Fire Science Technology curriculum, is being conducted in two high schools in the Fort Bend County Independent School District at Willowridge and Thurgood Marshall. This program, in partnership with HCC, allows students to graduate high school with college credits towards a Fire Fighter Certification. Our ongoing efforts to accomplish this goal include participating in the following job fairs/career days:

- Houston's Annual Urban League Job Fair
- Texas Southern University
- Prairie View A&M University
- African American Church Job Fairs
- University of Houston Downtown
- Houston's Annual Hispanic Forum
- Houston Independent School District's predominately minority high schools

Applicants must take and pass the City of Houston Civil Service Exam in order to be ranked for processing. The entire hiring process from advertising, recruiting, interviewing, administering physical ability test, scheduling fingerprints, polygraphs, background checks, and rendering conditional job offers is managed by the Recruiting Division.

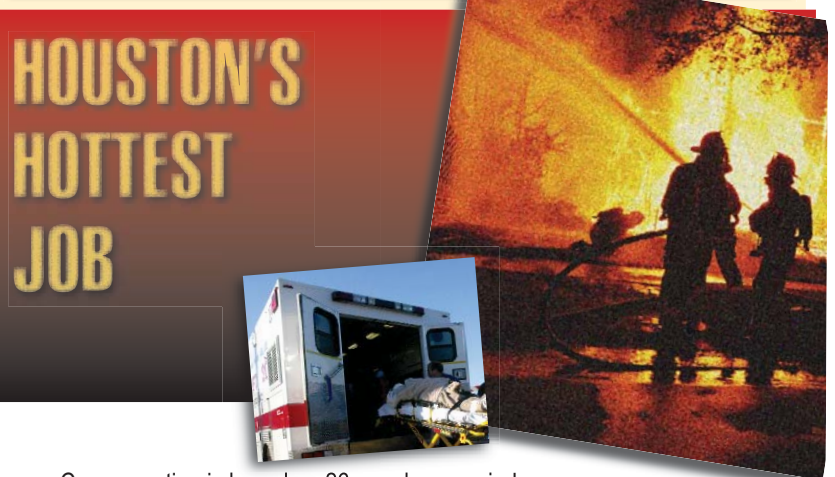
During calendar year 2004, approximately 1000 applicants were interviewed

and 357 new firefighters were hired.

In calendar year 2005, over 350 individuals were interviewed and 126 new firefighters were hired.



photo by Matt Milam



Compensation is based on 26 equal pay periods:

Rank	Bi-Weekly	Annual
Firefighter Trainee	\$1,056.70	\$27,474.20
Probationary Firefighter	\$1,236.00	\$32,136.00
1st Year Firefighter	\$1,339.33	\$34,822.58
2nd Year Firefighter	\$1,408.96	\$36,632.96
3rd, 4th Year Firefighter	\$1,482.76	\$38,551.31
5th, 6th, 7th Year Firefighter	\$1,575.19	\$40,954.94
8th, 9th, 10th Year Firefighter	\$1,619.82	\$42,115.32

Engineer Operator 3rd & 4th Year	\$1,900.16	\$49,404.16
Captain, Inspector, Mechanic, Investigator, Communications Captain 5th thru 9th Year	\$1,949.01	\$50,674.26

Specialty Premium Pay

Bilingual Pay	\$69.23	\$1,800.00
Emergency Medical Technician	\$75.69	\$1,968.00
Paramedic Restricted	\$115.38	\$3,000.00
Paramedic Unrestricted	\$276.92	\$7,200.00

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Firefighter Trainee Eligibility Criteria:

- Ability to complete Paramedic Certification Course- TDSHS
- Sealed transcript: 60 Transferable College Credit Hours "C" or above or...
- An Associates Degree or...
- 2 years military service: Provide a DD214 Member 4 - w/Honorable Discharge
- Age 19-36 (must not reach the age of 36 before the oath of office)
- Driving record: 2 or less moving violations in the last 36 months
- Ability to pass a professional polygraph
- Ability to pass a Criminal Background (NCIC) (TCIC)
- Ability to pass a medical exam (Based on NFPA 1582 standards)
- Ability to pass a drug screen
- Ability to pass a Physical Ability Test



Certified Firefighter/EMT FASTTRACK Eligibility Criteria:

- Ability to complete Paramedic Certification Course- TDSHS
- Texas Commission on Fire Protection Certification-Basic or Higher
- Texas Department of State Health Services (EMT)-Basic or Higher
- Sealed transcript with 15 Transferable College Credit Hours or...
- College Clock Hours with Course Completion Certificate- TCFP/TDSHS
- Age 19-36 (must not reach the age of 36 before the oath of office)
- Driving record: 2 or less moving violations in the last 36 months
- If prior military service: Provide a DD214 Member 4 - w/Honorable Discharge
- Ability to pass a professional polygraph
- Ability to pass a Criminal Background (NCIC) (TCIC)
- Ability to pass a medical exam (Based on NFPA 1582 standards)
- Ability to pass a drug screen
- Ability to pass a Physical Ability Test



Certified Paramedic Eligibility Criteria:

- Ability to complete Fire Protection Certification Course- Basic or Higher
- Certified by the Texas Department of State Health Services (EMT/Paramedic)
- Sealed transcript with 15 Transferable College Credit Hours or...
- College Clock Hours with Course Completion Certificate- TCFP/TDSHS
- Age 19-36 (must not reach the age of 36 before the oath of office)
- Driving record: 2 or less moving violations in the last 36 months
- Ability to pass a professional polygraph
- Ability to pass a Criminal Background (NCIC) (TCIC)
- Ability to pass a medical exam (Based on NFPA 1582 standards)
- Ability to pass a drug screen
- Ability to pass a Physical Ability Test



Aircraft Rescue Fire Firefighting (ARFF) - The objective of the Houston Fire Department's ARFF operations is to provide a safe exit path and timely rescue of aircraft incident victims.



The Hazmat Team- Comprised of 46 members on 4 shifts of 11 each, a District Chief and Senior Captain. They are housed at Houston Fire Station #22 located at 7825 Harrisburg.



The Houston Arson Bureau- The law enforcement entity of the Houston Fire Department that investigates all fires determined to be arson in a building, habitation or vehicle occurring within the city limits of Houston .



Rescue Team- The Houston Fire Department Technical Rescue Team is comprised of one team with 40 members. Their goal is to provide a safe and timely rescue of victims.



The Life Safety Division- Includes specialty inspection teams headed by Chief Inspectors. The Public Education Division seeks to reduce fire losses through continuous fire prevention education programs.